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Major restoration initiative for Tana River Delta

PHOTOS: JOHN MWACHARO

Victaria Luque Panadero, UNEP/GEF Task Manager - Biodiversity and Land Degrodatian (secand right) jains Noture Kenyo Executive Director Dr. Paul Matiku (fourth right) and ather afficials fram the Tana River and Lamu county gavernments ta launch 'The Restorotion Initiative Tono Delto' project in Gorsen, Tono River

Project sets out to restore degraded forest landscapes and reverse biodiversity loss for increased and improved ecosystem services at the delta.

Conservation of the Tana River Delta has been enhanced following the initiation of a new forest landscape restoration project. 'The Restoration Initiative (TRI) Tana Delta' funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) seeks to restore degraded forest landscapes in Tana River and Lamu counties. Nature Kenya is the project's implementing partner.

TRI Tana Delta will implement some elements of the delta's land use plan which provides for land and water allocation. The Tana Delta land use plan was facilitated by Nature Kenya with support from the Department of International Development (UK) and the Ecosystem Alliance.

TRI Tana Delta will enable local communities, civil society and national and county governments come up with policy and institutional frameworks to implement restorative land use initiatives. The project will build on lessons and experiences of income-generating activities to develop a business case to promote green value chains through private sector engagement. Lessons and experiences will be scaled up at a subset of other sites in Kenya including counties with similar issues like Siaya and Busia counties that share the Yala Swamp.

The Restoration Initiative is a programme to help countries restore degraded landscapes at scale.

Tana River Delta is a vast patchwork of palm savanna, seasonally flooded grassland, forest fragments, acacia woodland, lakes, marine wetlands and the river itself. It is one of the most important wetlands in Africa and a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) in Kenya. The wetland system provides intangible ecosystem services such as regulating the hydrological cycle, moderating climate, protecting soil from erosion, stabilizing the shoreline and reducing the impact of storm surges.

Among the project's target is to see 95,000 ha of indigenous community conservation areas (CCAs) in the Tana Delta being managed for multiple-use for the benefit of important biodiversity. A CCA is a type of conservancy based on traditional, cultural, and multiple land use under customary management by a community. Also targeted are 130,000 ha of land for sustainable livestock, fish and crop management, and 10,000 ha of degraded landscapes for restoration. The project seeks to have operational livestock, crop and fish farming, ecotourism, beekeeping and other nature-based business cooperatives encouraging their membership to incorporate biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management and restoration in their production processes.

A wide range of stakeholders, including national and county governments' ministries and departments, community-based organizations, non-government organizations and private investors, will be involved in the implementation process. Each stakeholder is expected to provide specific contributions to the implementation of project activities.

It's a hopeful time for deltas! In the west of Kenya, the Siaya and Busia county governors have endorsed the Yala Swamp land use plan. The Yala Swamp land use plan seeks to guide present and future development in the swamp without compromising its ecological integrity.

Livestock grazing ot Dide Waride, Tono River Delto.

PHOTO: NATURE KENYA ARCHIVES

World Land Trust raises funds to purchase 810 acres in Dakatcha Woodland!

In June 2019, World Land Trust (WLT) launched an appeal to help purchase and protect 810 acres of one of Kenya's threatened coastal forests: Dakatcha Woodland. Within a matter of weeks, the appeal had reached its target, giving the small wonders of the forest hope for a safe place to call home.

Nature Kenya alerted World Land Trust to the plight of one of the world's rarest birds, Clarke's Weaver, whose survival hangs in the balance. Its only known nesting site was discovered as recently as 2013, deep in the Brachyst orest of Dakatcha, near Malindi on Kenya's north coast. Less than 2,000 pairs of Clarke's Weavers are thought to exist.

Illegal activities such as logging of indigenous trees and charcoal production have destroyed large tracts of forest vegetation in Dakatcha. Uncontrolled pineapple farming and outside investor and land speculation have also put immense pressure on this vulnerable habitat.

Most of Dakatcha Woodland is not protected. Land purchase is considered to be one of the few viable options of preventing the extinction of the Clarke's Weaver and other threatened species such as the Golden-rumped Sengi (elephant-shrew) and Sokoke Pipit.

While it cannot be claimed that Clarke's Weaver and the other globally threatened species that live in the forest have been saved from extinction, 810 acres will at least be protected for the wildlife that has chosen to live there.

World Land Trust is grateful to African Bird Club for supporting the appeal by making a generous donation as part of their 25th anniversary celebrations. The Trust hopes to continue supporting Nature Kenya to purchase more land in Dakatcha in the near future.

We at Nature Kenya say 'asante sana' to WLT for their generous support towards saving threatened species and conserving key habitats.

SAVING SPECIES

High-level support urgently needed to save African Vultures

BY BIRDLIFE

BirdLife International has condemned the recent poisoning of 537 Critically Endangered vultures by elephant poachers in Botswana. This devastating incident has resulted in the country's highest recorded death toll of vultures associated with a single poisoning incident and is one of the worst killings of vultures on the continent, rivaling a similar incident in the Caprivi area of Namibia in 2013, where between 400-600 vultures were killed.

Although the Botswana government appears to have stepped up its anti-poaching initiatives, catastrophic vulture mortality continues to occur because of poisoning by poachers. Poachers poison vultures to stop them circling above carcasses - thus signaling their illegal activity. Targeted and non-targeted poisoning of vultures is escalating at an alarming rate across the continent, with a high number of incidents focused on southern Africa.

Vultures play a vital role in our environment by cleaning up rotting carcasses that pose health risks and can contain harmful diseases such as tuberculosis and rabies. By doing this, vultures can help prevent the spread of diseases amongst humans and animals, and they do it for free.

BirdLife Botswana has been working tirelessly to tackle vulture poisoning in the country. In collaboration with other BirdLife partners and organisations in the Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) region, they are working to address increasing elephant poaching; the main threat to the region's declining vulture populations. Improving cross border collaboration, enforcement and building capacity for wildlife crime prosecution and improving the availability of information are crucial to these efforts.

However, illegal wildlife poisoning is something that community support systems, education and awareness alone may not be able to tackle. Governments need to use legislative action to help save vultures and wildlife in Africa.

"If such catastrophic episodes continue to occur across Africa, we may lose the race to save these iconic and vitally important species," says Beckie Garbett from the BirdLife International Africa Partnership Secretariat. "Vultures are currently not receiving the global conservation support and recognition that many other highly threatened species are, which puts them on a back foot in terms of conservation organisations having the capacity to halt and reverse their declines."

BirdLife International is calling upon governments in Africa and other key influential stakeholders to pay attention to the desperate plight of the continent's vultures at relevant international policy forums. With the 18th CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP) meeting due to take place this month in Geneva, Switzerland, international Governments of CITES member states have the opportunity to pass relevant policy decisions that will help to address the plight of vultures and other wildlife species.

Only through high-level driven actions will African vultures get the attention and protection that they deserve from sentinel poisoning. It is the duty of those with the power to make a change, to stand up and make themselves heard on behalf of all wildlife species impacted by illegal activities in Africa.

For updates visit
www.naturekeny.org

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Frogs of DAKATCHA WOODLAND

PHOTOS BY EDWIN UTUMBI

Argus Reed frog

South-easterrn Foam-nest Tree frog

Eggs are laid in the foam nest above temporary pools, and tadpoles fall into the water.

August Evening Sky

BY FLEUR NG'WENO

Moon August '19

The 'new moon' – when the moon passes between the Earth and the sun, and we can't see its sunlit side – is on August 1 and August 30. Look for a slim crescent over the sunset on August 2 and 31. On August 7, it's the 'first quarter' – a half moon above us at sunset. The full moon rises in the east at sunset on August 15. The 'last quarter' – a half moon above us at dawn – is on August 23.

Meteor Shower

From July to August 24, you may see meteors from the Perseids meteor shower. Meteors are bits of dust, rock and ice from space burning up in the Earth's atmosphere. The ones this month were left by the passage of Comet Swift-Tuttle. People may call the meteors "shooting stars" or "burning spears". The meteor shower peaks on August 12 to 13. You are most likely to see the meteors after midnight from a dark location with a clear sky.

Stars & Planets August '19

The brilliant planet Jupiter escorts the constellation of Scorpio, the Scorpion, across the sky. Look for the red star Antares, the Scorpion's fiery eye, to the west (right) of Jupiter. The moon is near Jupiter and Antares on August 9. Above Antares, three bright stars form the Scorpion's claws. Southeast of Antares, the Scorpion's body and tail curve like a fishhook, with two stars for the sting.

Further east, the golden planet Saturn escorts the constellation that the ancient Greeks called Sagittarius, the Archer. The stars of Sagittarius form a shape like a teapot, or a shopping basket. During most of August, Saturn is close to the star Nunki in the 'handle' of the 'teapot'. The moon is near Saturn and Nunki on August 11 and 12.

The blue-white star Spica is high overhead. Arcturus, a bright orange star, is in the northwest. Below it, the constellation of the Big Dipper (the Plough) seems to be pouring towards the horizon.

North (left) of Sagittarius, the bright star Altair, escorted by two smaller stars, is rising. Further north, look for the bright white light of the star Vega.

The two very bright stars of the Centaur are in the southwest, pointing to the Southern Cross, now setting.

The 'red planet' Mars sets in the west in mid month. Little Mercury is in the predawn sky. In September, bright Venus will rise again above the sunset.

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AUGUST 2019 AT A GLIMPSE

Aug 7th	Morning Bird Walk/Public Talk
Aug 10th	FoNA Tree Walk
Aug 14th	Morning Bird Walk
Aug 17th	FoCP Nature Walk
Aug 18th	Sunday Bird Watch
Aug 21st	Morning Bird Walk
Aug 26th	FoNA Tree Walk
Aug 28th	Morning Bird Walk

Bird ringing every Tuesday morning (check with Ornithology section, National Museums).

Birders Please Note! The Wednesday Morning Birdwalks meet at 8:30 am at the Nairobi National Museum. Transport is on a self-help basis. The group meets in the courtyard of the Nairobi National Museum, past the entrance to the galleries. We normally return at about 12:30 pm.

The Sunday Birdwatch on the THIRD Sunday of each month now also meets at 8:30 am, at the same location. It is a day trip; please bring water and lunch.

Mombasa Birdwalks On the 3rd Saturday of each month. For meeting time and place, please contact Taibali Hamzali <thamzali@gmail.com> / 0733-980540, or Doris Schaule <dorischaule@gmail.com> / 0722-277752. Or check Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>

Contact the office for information on other birdwalks in Kakamega, Kisumu, and other sites

Ngong Forest walks - 1st and 3rd Saturday at 9.00 am. Contact Simon 0729-840715

Download free QR Readers from the web and scan this QR (Quick Response) code with your smart phone for pictures and more stories.

Join us at Swara Acacia Lodge for the Big Birding Weekend on October 26th, 2019

A weekend of Birding, migration study, bird ringing and lectures by Fleur Ng'weno and team!

Cost: Ksh 9,800 per person sharing, Ksh 14,800 Single. All meals will be provided.

Swara Acacia is on Mombasa Road just past Athi River, visit **http://www.swaraacacia.com/**

For more details/booking call **+254717062855** or email **info@swaraacacia.com**

Friends of City Park Management Committee
volunteer members needed!
A call for members who have time & experience and who are good team players

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Schools, Clubs	1,500
Corporates	20,000 -30,000

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For details on associated groups such as Youth Committee, Succulenta, and Friends of Nairobi Arboretum, City Park or Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, contact office@naturekenya.org